

| <b>Contents</b>  | <b>Page</b> |
|--|-------------|
| Photographic Evidence of Common Merganser Breeding in West Virginia<br>—Casey Rucker . . . . .                 | 119         |
| Possible Breeding Record for Merlines in West Virginia<br>—Casey Rucker . . . . .                              | 121         |
| Recent Bird Population Trends in the Central Appalachian Mountains of<br>West Virginia<br>—Greg Eddy . . . . . | 123         |
| Valley Falls State Park Saw-Whet Owl Banding Station 2008<br>—Joey Herron . . . . .                            | 127         |
| Jackson's Mill Migration Observatory: Fall Migration 2008<br>—Joey Herron . . . . .                            | 129         |
| A.O.U. Taxonomic Changes<br>—A. R. Buckelew Jr. . . . .  | 131         |
| Erratum . . . . .  | 132         |
| Field Notes<br>—James Triplett and Beverly Triplett . . . . .  | 133         |
| New Field Notes Editor Announced . . . . .   | 141         |

**Editorial Staff**

Editor • Albert R. Buckelew Jr., Department of Biology, Bethany College, Bethany, WV 26032  
Associate Editor • Marjorie Keatley, Marshall Community and Technical College, Huntington, WV 25755  
Field Notes Editor • James Triplett and Beverly Triplett, 1198 Fledderjohn Road, Charleston, WV 25314  
Advisory Editorial Board • Greg E. Eddy, Joey Herron, Matthew Orsie,  
James D. Phillips, Patricia Temple

*The Redstart* is published quarterly in January, April, July, and October at P.O. Box 4077, Wheeling, WV 26003. The journal of the Brooks Bird Club, it is mailed to all members in good standing. Nonmember subscription price is \$17. Individual copies are \$4, except the Foray issue, which is \$8. Changes of address and requests for back issues should be mailed to P.O. Box 4077, Wheeling, WV 26003. Articles for publication and books for review should be mailed to the editor. Printed on recycled paper by PrinTech, Wheeling, WV. ISSN: 0034-2165

# Photographic Evidence of Common Merganser Breeding in West Virginia

Casey Rucker

On July 15, 2009, Michael Powell photographed two female adult Common Mergansers with 15 chicks at Smoke Hole in Pendleton County. I believe it is the first photographic breeding evidence for this species in West Virginia. The photo was taken within the safe dates for our Breeding Bird Atlas. The only prior breeding record was of eggs collected in 1897. The record was discovered and reported by Lloyd F. Kiff (1989). Prior to that article, Common Mergansers had never been considered to breed in this state. This sighting accords with the recent expansion of this species southward, as well as with Gary Felton's (2003) observations of Common Mergansers at Rowlesburg in mid-August of 2001, and with my undocumented sighting of one on the Dryfork River in late June 2006 together with two other undocumented reports of a female with chicks on the same river that same summer. There were six reports of Common Mergansers on the Cheat River during the BBC Foray at Camp Kidd in Tucker County from June 9 to June 17, 2006 (Jacobs 2007). Camp Pocahontas Foray participants (June 15–22, 2008) found three female Common Mergansers on the East Fork River (Shaver's Fork) near Bartow (Triplett & Triplett, 2009).

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Common Mergansers at Smoke Hole, July 15, 2009. Photo by Michael Powell

P.O. Box 2  
Seneca Rocks, WV 26884  
304-866-4004  
304-866-7074 (fax)

## Possible Breeding Record for Merlins in West Virginia

Casey Rucker

Thursday July 30, 2009, I got to visit the property near Timberline, Tucker County, West Virginia, where Merlins had been reported earlier in the week. I was a couple of hundred yards from where a group of Merlins giving alarm calls had been reported, when I heard a piercing and insistent call, described by Sodi et al. (1993) as the Merlin's territorial/aggressive call, coming from the top of a dead balsam fir about 100 yards away. Binoculars revealed the white throat and dark-gray back and wings of a female or juvenile Merlin, but this one was calling insistently and authoritatively, and I took it for an adult, female parent. Not very far down the path, I looked straight ahead through a few trees and saw, on a single dead tree, the reason for the mother's alarm: two more Merlins. One was more brown and the other was more gray, and they both had white throats. I believe they were male and female juveniles. They began making juvenile-like mewing noises, while (what I took to be the) female parent kept yelling at me with the characteristic alarm call. I walked a little closer (maybe 100 yards away from the juveniles, and mom took off toward me, circling me and coming within 10 feet of my head, all the time screaming her aggressive call. When I got to maybe 75 yards from the two juveniles, they took off, and all of the group was flying around calling, the adult keeping up the territorial/aggressive call and the others mewing and sounding just like juvenile birds. I didn't linger more than a couple of minutes—the birds were clearly upset by my presence, and all three quieted down almost as soon as I started walking away.

Having seen those birds that evening, I now think I saw an adult male the next morning near the settling ponds at Canaan Valley State Park—its wings and back were bluer than any of the birds I saw the previous evening, and his breast and belly were much buffier, too. Sodi et al. (1993) write, "Fledglings remain dependent upon adults and remain near nest sites for 1 to 4 weeks. Both adults feed young during this period, males more than females. Adults roost away from the nest; siblings roost together. Other than that the birds are, "Usually solitary when not breeding." Wintering in pairs has been reported; they may sometimes roost communally, and they migrate in loose groups (Sodi et al., 1993). I believe that the birds I observed may be a breeding family of Merlins in our state. I may have seen the male parent out hunting for the juveniles, while the female remained with the juveniles to defend them.

According to George Hall (1983), there have been a few early August records of Merlins from the Allegheny Front and other high altitude locations in West Virginia that may have been breeding birds. I also note that Merlins have bucked the

downward trend in numbers seen in many species and actually increased in population over the last few decades.

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P.O. Box 2  
Seneca Rocks, WV 26884  
304-866-4004  
304-866-7074 (fax)

## Recent Bird Population Trends in the Central Appalachian Mountains of West Virginia

Greg Eddy

At the 2008 Foray in Pocahontas County, West Virginia, four singing male study plots were repeated that had been studied for many years. (Eddy, 2009) The data from these study plots, along with two others, were analyzed and discussed in *The Redstart* for April 2008. (Eddy, 2008) At that time, it was reported that neotropical migrant populations had declined by about 60% and non-neotropical migrants had declined by nearly 40% over the period of the study.

This 2008 Foray report is on only four plots and does not include two that were part of the previous study: the Northern Hardwoods and the Burner Mountain plots. These plots were not run in 2008. The four plots repeated in 2008 were the Virgin Spruce started in 1947 and now run 14 times; the Gaudineer Knob started in 1947 and run 13 times; and the Black Cherry and the Blister Run Swamp plots, both started in 1968 and each now run nine times. The number of species on each plot showed little difference from their 2003 numbers, but all 2008 plots except the Blister Run Swamp plot had an increase in males per 100 acres over the number in 2003. These increases were as much as two to three times larger.

These increases can be explained by several factors. One factor is that in 2003 it rained nearly every day that the plots were studied. This interfered with bird nesting and especially with the people doing the census on the plots. Therefore, the 2003 numbers may have been reported as lower than they actually were, but other factors may have been responsible for the increases.

On the Gaudineer Knob plot, the number went from 20 males per 100 acres in 2003 to 40 in 2008. Half of the increase was due to a doubling in the number of Magnolia Warblers from 10 to 20. This is probably due to an increase in numbers of Red Spruce of the size that Magnolia Warblers like.

The increase in males per 100 acres on the Black Cherry plot was due almost exclusively to an increase in Ovenbird numbers, which went from 0 to 23 per 100 acres and Hermit Thrush, which increased from 0 to 20 per 100 acres. Also, the non-neotropical Dark-eyed Juncos went from 0 to 17 per 100 acres. I believe these increases are due to a significant change in the understory on this plot.

Several species increased on the Virgin Spruce plot. Large increases in males per 100 acres occurred in Blue-headed Vireo, from 0 to 17, Blackburnian warblers, from 0 to 17, and Black-throated Green warblers, from 10 to 23. The Virgin Spruce plot has shown fairly erratic results over the years because the trees are so big that the loss of only one makes a big difference in the habitat. The plot size of 15 acres is not quite large enough of a sample, but the plot has been run 14 times over 61 years and the trends should give an accurate picture of the populations trends.

The Blister Run Swamp plot is the only plot that had a decrease from 2003 to 2008. The decrease was small and is due to a loss in its Red-eyed Vireos, which decreased from 20 to 0. This is possibly due to a loss of taller trees due to a windstorm. We have found over the years that the taller trees do not last long in the swamp. They are very vulnerable to high winds in the open swamp where they have very shallow root systems.

See Table 1 for a summary of statistical analysis of the data for the four plots for all years.

### Conclusions

It is too early to take these increases as encouraging. The 2008 figures are still quite low. They are near the low of the overall trends discussed in Eddy (2008), but there is encouraging data for some species. An example is that Hermit Thrush whose numbers showed an increase on the study plots and on the Breeding Bird Surveys conducted at the 2008 Foray; however, it is interesting, also, that these Breeding Bird Surveys conducted during the 2008 Foray showed a continuing decline in numbers of most other birds. (McCullough et al., 2008).

Table 1  
Analysis of Singing Male Census Plot Data for All Years

Y1 is the Y intercept of the regression line at beginning of study, Y2 is the Y intercept at end of study, Slope is the slope of the regression line, Regression Coefficient is the value of the statistic “r,” % Decline is the results have only a 1% (.01) or 5% (.05) chance of resulting from chance.

- A – Number of non-neotropical migrant species
- B – Number of neotropical migrant species.
- C – Number of non-neotropical males/100 acres.
- D – Number of neotropical males/100 acres.

|                                      | Y1   | Y2   | Slope | Regression Coefficient | Percent Decline | Significance Level |
|--------------------------------------|------|------|-------|------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| <u>Blister Run Swamp (1968-2007)</u> |      |      |       |                        |                 |                    |
| A                                    | 11.3 | 10.6 | -0.02 | -.11                   | 8               |                    |
| B                                    | 11.9 | 13.2 | +0.03 | .26                    | +6.4            |                    |
| C                                    | 106  | 71   | -.90  | -.50                   | 34              |                    |
| D                                    | 193  | 90   | -2.6  | -.56                   | 53              |                    |
| <u>Gaudineer Knob (1947-2007)</u>    |      |      |       |                        |                 |                    |
| A                                    | 9.0  | 5.9  | -0.05 | -.55                   | 35              | 0.05               |
| B                                    | 8.8  | 4.7  | -0.05 | -.51                   | 39              | 0.05               |
| C                                    | 124  | 70.4 | -.89  | -.50                   | 43              | 0.05               |
| D                                    | 152  | 4.8  | -2.42 | -.78                   | 97              | 0.01               |
| <u>Virgin Spruce (1947-2007)</u>     |      |      |       |                        |                 |                    |
| A                                    | 13   | 9.2  | -0.06 | -.54                   | 30              | 0.05               |
| B                                    | 15   | 7.7  | -.12  | -.76                   | 49              | 0.01               |
| C                                    | 164  | 84   | -1.3  | -.83                   | 49              | 0.01               |
| D                                    | 218  | 112  | -2.0  | -.54                   | 49              | 0.05               |
| <u>Black Cherry (1968-2007)</u>      |      |      |       |                        |                 |                    |
| A                                    | 5.2  | 4.1  | -0.03 | -.31                   | 22              |                    |
| B                                    | 13.2 | 10.2 | -.08  | -.68                   | 23              | 0.05               |
| C                                    | 23.8 | 10.4 | -.32  | -.39                   | 54              |                    |
| D                                    | 160  | 112  | -1.21 | -.42                   | 30              |                    |
| <u>Averages of all Plots</u>         |      |      |       |                        |                 |                    |
| A                                    | 101  | 7.7  | -0.03 | -.34                   | 21              |                    |
| B                                    | 11.1 | 7.4  | -0.05 | -.49                   | 31              | 0.05               |
| C                                    | 108  | 65.5 | -1.0  | -.43                   | 40              |                    |
| D                                    | 195  | 82   | -2.0  | -.74                   | 58              | 0.01               |

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13 Aster Dr., Clinton Hills  
Triadelphia, WV 26059

## Valley Falls State Park Saw-whet Owl Banding Station – 2008

Joey Herron

The fourth year of banding Northern Saw-whet Owls (NSWO) at Valley Falls State Park in Marion County, West Virginia, netted the second highest number and established this site as a legitimate area for banding migrating owls in the fall. This year we added a 10 ft. x 20 ft. shed for banding and demonstrations.

Banding began on October 10, 2008, and ended on November 28, 2008. Thirty-five NSWO were captured, including three foreign recaptures. One recapture was from Pennsylvania and the other two were banded in Canada. One of the latter had been banded just 30 days earlier at Long Point Bird Observatory. Once again this year, late October and early November appeared to be the height of the migration with 30 owls captured between October 18 and November 6. The station operated on 20 nights with the nets being opened for 77¼ hours. Twelve of the 20 nights yielded owls with 12 NSWO's captured on the night of November 5.

This year also produced a gray phase Eastern Screech-Owl banded on the night of November 28. Snow fell for the first time during banding, covering the nets with snow and ice and delaying banding a couple nights. Thirty-two adults and 3 hatch-year NSWO captures for 2008 was the reverse of 36 hatch-year owls and 13 adults for 2007 (Table 1). Females again led the way in captures in 2008 (Table 2). After four years of banding, 94 NSWOs have been captured, including 10 foreign recaptures. The breakdown shows a heavy advantage for females, 68% females compared to 8% for males. The unknown category completes the last 24%. The adult, hatch-year ratio is close to even with 56% adult to 44% hatch-year individuals.

The station was visited by local newspaper reporters, and an article was published about the banding operation with a great picture of an owl that was caught and banded while the newspaper people were present. I would like to thank Valley Falls State Park superintendent, Ron Fawcett, for the use of the park facilities and helping with the set-up of the shed for the banding operation. Without Ron's support this operation would not be possible.

511 Ohio Ave  
Fairmont, WV

Table 1  
Banding Summary for 2008

| Date     | Time                   | NSWO caught             |
|----------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 10/10/08 | 9:30 p.m. – 1:00 a.m.  | 2                       |
| 10/13/08 | 8:30 p.m. – 10:45 p.m. | 0                       |
| 10/16/08 | 8:30 p.m. – 10:30 p.m. | 0                       |
| 10/18/08 | 10:45 p.m. – 1:00 a.m. | 2                       |
| 10/19/08 | 8:30 p.m. – 12:30 a.m. | 4 (1 foreign recap)     |
| 10/21/08 | 8:30 p.m. – 1:00 a.m.  | 1                       |
| 10/22/08 | 8:30 p.m. – 11:45 p.m. | 5                       |
| 10/23/08 | 8:30 p.m. – 12:00 a.m. | 1                       |
| 10/25/08 | 9:30 p.m. – 1:00 a.m.  | 2                       |
| 10/29/08 | 10:00 p.m. – 1:00 a.m. | 0                       |
| 10/30/08 | 8:45 p.m. – 12:45 a.m. | 2 (1 foreign recapture) |
| 10/31/08 | 8:45 p.m. – 12:45 a.m. | 1                       |
| 11/01/08 | 8:20 p.m. – 12:45 a.m. | 0                       |
| 11/05/08 | 8:45 p.m. – 2:30 a.m.  | 12                      |
| 11/06/08 | 8:30 p.m. – 12:00 a.m. | 2                       |
| 11/08/08 | 8:30 p.m. – 1:00 a.m.  | 0                       |
| 11/10/08 | 9:00 p.m. – 2:15 a.m.  | 0                       |
| 11/21/08 | 8:30 p.m. – 12:30 a.m. | 1 (foreign recapture)   |
| 11/23/08 | 7:30 p.m. – 12:30 a.m. | 0                       |
| 11/28/08 | 8:30 p.m. – 1:30 a.m.  | 0 (1 E. Screech-Owl)    |
|          |                        | Total 35                |

Table 2  
Age of Captured Owls

| Age                    | Number | Percent of total |
|------------------------|--------|------------------|
| Second year (SY)       | 12     | 34.2%            |
| After hatch-year (AHY) | 20     | 57.1%            |
| SY and AHY combined    | 32     | 91.4%            |
| Hatch-year (HY)        | 3      | 8.6%             |
| Sex                    |        |                  |
| Female                 | 26     | 74.3%            |
| Male                   | 3      | 8.6%             |
| Unknown                | 6      | 17.1%            |

# Jackson's Mill Migration Observatory: Fall Migration 2008

Joey Herron

The fifth year of fall banding at Jackson's Mill Migration Observatory (JMMO), Lewis County, West Virginia, was completed in October 2008. Banding occurred on five days starting October 5 and ended on October 22. Seventy-four birds of 21 species were captured, bringing the five-year total to 370 banded birds of 41 species. Six 12-meter nets were used each day with a capture ratio of 64.9 birds per 100 net hours. The biggest flight day was October 11 with 27 birds captured; October 5 had the least captured with eight birds. A Carolina Wren banded in April was recaptured, and a Northern Cardinal was recaptured from two years prior. Table 1 shows the species banded in 2008.

The White-throated Sparrow was the most numerous species with 20 bandings followed by the Eastern Towhee with 11. No new species were caught, but the Hermit Thrush made a significant gain with eight captures this year compared to only five for the four previous years. Numerous Cedar Waxwings, Eastern Bluebirds, Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers, and Red-bellied Woodpeckers were observed during the banding period, and many Blue Jays, Purple Finches, and Juncos were seen on the last day of banding.

In five years of banding, 370 birds of 41 species have been captured. Seven species make up over half of the birds captured. These are White-throated Sparrow (63), Eastern Towhee (48), Northern Cardinal (26), Gray Catbird (20), Song Sparrow (18), and Carolina Wren (17) tied with Magnolia Warbler. Other birds in the top 12 are Ovenbird (15), Ruby-crowned Kinglet (14), Hermit Thrush and Yellow-rumped Warbler (13), and Tufted Titmouse (11).

Thanks to Jackson's Mill State 4-H Camp for permission to band on the property and to the staff and grounds keepers for their support and help.

Table 1  
Species Banded at Jackson's Mill Migration Observatory in 2008

| Species             | No. | First Date | Last Date | No. of Days Captured |
|---------------------|-----|------------|-----------|----------------------|
| Gray Cheeked Thrush | 1   | Oct. 11    |           | 1                    |
| Northern Cardinal   | 4   | Oct. 5     | Oct. 18   | 2                    |
| Eastern Towhee      | 11  | Oct. 5     | Oct. 22   | 4                    |
| Ovenbird            | 1   | Oct. 12    |           | 1                    |
| Magnolia Warbler    | 4   | Oct. 5     | Oct. 12   | 2                    |

| Species                | No. | First Date | Last Date | No. of Days<br>Captured |
|------------------------|-----|------------|-----------|-------------------------|
| Yellow-rumped Warbler  | 2   | Oct. 12    |           | 1                       |
| White-eyed Vireo       | 1   | Oct. 11    |           | 1                       |
| Solitary Vireo         | 1   | Oct. 11    |           | 1                       |
| Indigo Bunting         | 2   | Oct. 5     | Oct. 12   | 2                       |
| Carolina Wren          | 4   | Oct. 5     | Oct. 22   | 3                       |
| Hermit Thrush          | 8   | Oct. 11    | Oct. 22   | 4                       |
| White-throated Sparrow | 20  | Oct. 11    | Oct. 22   | 4                       |
| Song Sparrow           | 1   | Oct. 11    |           | 1                       |
| Tufted Titmouse        | 2   | Oct. 11    | Oct. 22   | 2                       |
| Carolina Chickadee     | 3   | Oct. 11    | Oct. 18   | 2                       |
| Ruby-crowned Kinglet   | 2   | Oct. 18    |           | 1                       |
| Downy Woodpecker       | 2   | Oct. 11    |           | 1                       |
| Blue Jay               | 2   | Oct. 11    | Oct. 18   | 2                       |
| House Finch            | 1   | Oct. 11    |           | 1                       |
| American Goldfinch     | 1   | Oct. 18    |           | 1                       |
| Field Sparrow          | 1   | Oct. 12    |           | 1                       |

511 Fairmont Ave.  
Fairmont, WV 26554

## A.O.U. Taxonomic Changes

Albert R. Buckelew Jr.

The Fiftieth Supplement to The American Ornithologists' Union *Check-List of North American Birds* (Chesser et al., 2009) includes several changes in bird names of special interest to West Virginia birders. Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow will be known as Nelson's Sparrow, and the Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow will be known simply as the Saltmarsh Sparrow.

The Common Redpoll and Hoary Redpoll, formerly in the Genus *Carduelis*, are moved to the Genus *Acanthis* and become *Acanthis flammea* and *Acanthis hornemanni*, respectively. The Pine Siskin, formerly *Cradaelis pinus*, becomes *Spinus pinus*, and the American Goldfinch, formerly *Carduelis tristis*, becomes *Spinus tristis*. The sequence of finch species on our checklist will remain unchanged.

The sequence of families in the Order Galliformes is changed so that Odontophoridae precedes the Phasianidae. Thus the Northern Bobwhite now comes before the Ring-necked Pheasant on our checklist. *The Redstart* follows the AOU nomenclature and systematics. Therefore, the new names and sequences will be used in *The Redstart* beginning with this issue of our journal.

### Reference

Chesser, R. T., Banks, R. C., Barker, F. K., Cicero, C., Dunn, J. L., Kratter, A. W., Lovette, I. J., Rasmussen, P. C., Remsen, J. V. Jr., Rising, J. D., Stotz, D. F., & Winker, K. (2009). Fiftieth supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union *Check-List of North American Birds*. *The Auk*, 126(3), 705-714.

Department of Biology  
Bethany College  
Bethany, WV 26032

## Erratum

## Field Notes Spring Season

March, 2009–May, 2009

James Triplett and Beverly Triplett

The spring weather was average, according to the data from the Cornell University Climate Center. The average temperature for the state for the spring period was 52.3°F and the average precipitation was 12.79 in. The precipitation amounts were 63% of normal and the temperature was 1.4 degrees above normal.

These notes were gathered from the National Audubon Society sponsored West Virginia Bird Listserv and from field notes submitted to the editor by phone, e-mail, and regular mail. The full content of the submitted notes by the contributors of the West Virginia Listserv may be viewed by visiting the archives at the following web site: [www.list.audubon.org/archives/wv-bird.html](http://www.list.audubon.org/archives/wv-bird.html). For the spring season, people from 25 out of 55 West Virginia counties reported their bird sightings on the Listserv. Breeding records are reported in italics below.

**Ducks, Swans, and Geese**—Cynthia Ellis noted **Snow Geese** on March 22 in Mason County. **Canada Geese** were seen throughout the state in more than 15 counties. Matthew Orsie had the only report for **Mute Swans** during the spring season on March 5 in Jefferson County. On March 20, Robert Dean mentioned that during the night, he and his younger son, Robin, heard a flock of four **Tundra Swans** go over the area where they were staying in Hardy County and three more in the morning hours.

The number of counties reporting ducks is listed after the species name: **Wood Ducks**–18, **Gadwalls**–4, **American Wigeons**–3, **American Black Ducks**–6, **Mallards**–16, **Blue-winged Teals**–12, **Northern Shovelers**–7, **Northern Pintails**–2, **Green-winged Teals**–8, **Canvasbacks**–1, **Redheads**–5, **Ring-necked Ducks**–14, **Greater Scaups**–4, **Lesser Scaups**–11, **Surf Scoters**–11, **White-winged Scoters**–2, **Black Scoter**–1, **Long-tailed Ducks**–1, **Buffleheads**–13, **Common Goldeneyes**–2, all three **Mergansers**–13, and **Ruddy Ducks**–9.

**Bobwhites, Pheasants, Grouse, and Turkeys**—**Northern Bobwhites** were observed by Matthew Orsie in Jefferson County on April 25, Tom Igo in Mason County on April 1, and by Cynthia Ellis in Putnam County on May 25. Terry Bronson saw **Ring-necked Pheasants** in Tucker County on May 28. **Ruffed Grouse** were noted in nine counties. **Wild Turkeys** were abundant in 13 counties. Gary Felton made the comment that his “backyard was turning into a turkey lek.” Felton had a flock of 10–13 Wild Turkeys coming to his backyard to feed for at least two months, and they seemed to be getting used to his presence, with gobblers even displaying when he walked out of the house.



**Loons, Grebes**—**Common Loons** were noted in seven counties. **Pied-billed Grebes** and **Horned Grebes** were found in many counties during the spring. **Red-necked Grebes** were seen in Cabell County (WA, 3/26), Jefferson County (MO, 3/4), and Wetzel County (WJ, 4/10).

**Cormorants, Bitterns, Herons, and Egrets**—**Double-crested Cormorants** were spotted in nine counties during the spring. The Route 2 Birders recorded **American Bitterns** in Mason County on April 18, and on May 25, Matthew Orsie noted the birds in Tucker County. Matthew Orsie listed a **Least Bittern** in Mason County on May 3. **Great Blue Herons** were frequently noted throughout the state. **Great Egrets** were mentioned in eight counties: Cabell (R2B, 4/11), Jefferson (MO, 4/13), Kanawha (HG, 4/20), Mason (R2B, 4/18), Preston (GF, 4/11), Putnam (SA, 3/24), Wetzel (WJ, 3/25), and Wood (RJE, 4/11). Wendell Argabrite saw a **Snowy Egret** in Mason County on May 1 and a **Cattle Egret** on April 29 in Cabell County. **Green Herons** and **Black-crowned Night-Herons** were commonly spotted in 10 counties.

**Vultures and Accipitridae**—**Black Vultures** and **Turkey Vultures** were named in numerous reports throughout the area. **Ospreys** *on their nests were noted in several areas*. On April 2, Jon Benedetti, Patrick Collins, Barbara Hohman, and Beverly Triplett watched an **Osprey** *on its nest at the Belleville Lock and Dam on the Ohio River near Parkersburg*. Gary Felton observed **Ospreys** in April and May in Monongalia and Preston Counties. **Bald Eagles** were noticed in seven counties: Greenbrier (BW, 4/27), Monroe (JJP, 3/1), Monongalia (KA, 3/26), Summers (JJP, 3/1, 3/16, 5/1), Taylor (JDe, 3/24), Tucker (MC, 4/3), and Wood (JB, 3/19). Somewhat numerous were reports of **Northern Harriers**, **Sharp-shinned Hawks**, and **Cooper's Hawks**. On March 31, Kimberly Kazmierski was amazed to open a door and find a **Sharp-shinned Hawk** about five feet away from her. On April 13, Wetzel County, Wilma Jarrell watched a **Sharp-shinned Hawk** from her window. The **Sharp-shinned Hawk** sat in a nearby bush, then took a freshly caught male **Brown-headed Cowbird** down to the ground, held the bird until its wings had stilled, and then flew off with his fresh meal. William Johnson observed a pair of **Cooper's Hawks** *in the process of building a nest about a block from his house in Morgantown, Monongalia County, the week before April 19*. Nina Ott saw a **Northern Goshawk** in Parkersburg on April 24. **Red-Shouldered Hawks**, **Broad-winged Hawks**, and **Red-tailed Hawks** were widespread throughout the state during the spring season. Four counties noted **Golden Eagles**: Hardy (DC, 3/22), Pocahontas (RB, 3/8), Summers (JJP, 3/8 and RPWP, 4/21), and Tucker (CR, 4/27).

**Falcons**—**American Kestrels** were noted in 10 counties. A **Merlin** eating its prey was photographed by Roger Hardway at the Winfield Locks, Putnam County, in early April. Two **Peregrine Falcons**, with banding tags visible on their legs,

were seen by Doren Burrell and James Triplett at the Fort Hill I-64 Bridge, Kanawha County, on March 31. During the Mountwood Bird Club outing on May 28, a **Peregrine Falcon** chick was found at the same nesting site as the 2008 nest under the Belpre Bridge, Parkersburg, Wood County. Wendell Argabrite saw a **Peregrine Falcon** in Mason County on May 9.

**Rails and Coots**—One **King Rail** was reported by Matthew Orsie in Cabell County on May 3. **Virginia Rails** were reported in three counties: Berkley (CD, 3/20), Cabell (GR, 5/5), and Jefferson (MO, 4/8). David Patick and Steve Gillespie saw **Soras** at Greenbottom WMA, Cabell County, on April 4. Matthew Orsie noted a **Sora** in Jefferson County on April 16. **American Coots** were observed in many areas in the state during the spring.

**Cranes**—Wendell Argabrite found a **Sandhill Crane** at Greenbottom WMA on April 6. John Waugaman reported the sighting of a **Sandhill Crane** on Spring Valley Drive, Cabell County, on April 23. Penny and Michael Miller sent A. Buckelew a photo of a **Sandhill Crane** taken in their horse pasture in West Liberty, Ohio County, on March 26.

**Plovers**—**Black-bellied Plovers** were listed in Mason County (WA, 5/11), Pocahontas County (SK, 5/4), and Preston County (GF, 5/4). Matthew Orsie spotted **Semipalmated Plovers** in Cabell County on May 3. **Semipalmated Plovers** were also seen in Mason County on May 29 by James Triplett and J. Lawrence Smith. Wendell Argabrite saw the **Semipalmated Plovers** in Mason County on May 9. **Killdeer** were common throughout the state. Gary Felton observed **Killdeer fledglings** on March 11 in Preston County.

**Sandpipers**—**Greater** and **Lesser Yellowlegs** and **Solitary** and **Spotted Sandpipers** were noted in most areas of the state. On May 29, “Allegheny Vistas” (aka J. Lawrence Smith and James Triplett) spotted more than 50 **Lesser Yellowlegs** on Route 35 near Mt. Vernon Farm, in a field covered with water due to recent rains. Gary Felton found an **Upland Sandpiper** in Preston County on April 28 and a **Ruddy Turnstone** on May 20 and 21. Comments about the following sandpipers were also posted during the spring season: **Semipalmated Sandpipers, Least Sandpipers, White-rumped Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Dunlins, Short-billed and Long-billed Dowitchers, Wilson’s Snipes, American Woodcocks, and Red-necked Phalaropes**. Wilma Jarrell flushed a juvenile **American Woodcock** while on a morning hike on April 26 in Wetzel County.

**Gulls and Terns**—**Bonaparte’s, Ring-billed,** and **Herring Gulls** were common during the spring in most areas. Two reports of **Caspian Terns** were received from Monongalia County (BM, 4/11) and Putnam County (RH, 5/4). James and Judy Phillips saw a **Common Tern** on May 7 in Summers County. **Forester’s Terns** were noted in Jefferson County (MO, 4/13) and Wayne County (GR, 4/18).

**Pigeons, Doves and Cuckoos**—**Rock Pigeons** and **Mourning Doves** were widespread in the state. Roger Hardway got a good look at, and a few photos of, a **Black-billed Cuckoo** near the armory at the Winfield Locks on May 20. **Black-billed Cuckoos** were also noted in Cabell County (JN/5/13), Kanawha County (JW, SR, 5/9), Wetzel County (WJ, 5/9), and Wood County (NO, 4/24). **Yellow-billed Cuckoos** were listed in many areas.

**Owls**—Two observers noted **Eastern Screech-Owls**: Joey Herron in Marion County on May 6 and Casey Rucker in Tucker County on May 22. James Taylor, in Bramwell, Mercer County, remarked about seeing a **Great Horned Owl** chasing a grey squirrel. The squirrel was able to escape the attack by running along the power lines. Eleven listings of **Barred Owls** were made during the spring. On May 23, David Patick heard two **Saw-whet Owls** calling on both sides of the Scenic Highway, near the Big Spruce Overlook in Pocahontas County.

**Nighthawks and Whip-poor-wills**—Eleven sightings of **Common Nighthawks** were noted. Gary Rankin heard a **Chuck-will's-widow** at 3:30 a.m. in Wayne County on May 27. Rankin noted that this was the first time he had heard this bird in West Virginia. **Whip-poor-wills** were reported in six counties.

**Chimney Swifts, Hummingbirds, and Kingfishers** were commonly noted throughout the state during the spring season. Wilma Jarrell commented that she saw three **Chimney Swifts** in New Martinsville on April 6, which may be the earliest she had ever seen swifts. **Ruby-throated Hummingbirds** were frequently mentioned in reports, with the earliest report occurring on April 18 in Putnam County (KK). **Belted Kingfishers** were routinely reported throughout the state.

**Woodpeckers**—**Red-headed Woodpeckers** were spotted in seven counties: Jefferson (SW, 4/22), Kanawha (DG, 5/24), Lewis (DSa, 5/3), Mason (GR, 5/5), Richie (JF, 5/12), Wayne (JW, 3/8), and Wetzel (WJ, 4/20). Scott Wilkinson described the return of one of a pair of **Red-headed Woodpeckers** to his backyard near Harpers Ferry on April 12. A pair has been breeding in his yard for the past three years. John Fichtner saw a **Red-headed Woodpecker** at Northbend State Park, Richie County, on the Fisherman Trail on May 12. All other woodpeckers on the West Virginia checklist were widespread throughout the state during the spring season.

**Flycatchers**—Flycatchers that were reported in most areas of the state during the spring included **Eastern Wood-Pee-wee**, **Acadian**, **Willow**, **Eastern Phoebe**, **Great Crested**, and **Eastern Kingbird**. Gary Felton noted an **Olive-sided Flycatcher** in Preston County on May 19. Casey Rucker saw his first **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** in West Virginia on May 28 on FR 19, just below Dolly Sods. Flycatchers reported in fewer locations include the **Alder Flycatcher** in Pocahontas County (DP, 5/23), Tucker County (CR, 5/21), and Wetzel County (WJ, 5/14) and the **Least Flycatcher** in Pocahontas County (WT, 5/2), Tucker County (MO, 5/25), and Wetzel County (WJ, 5/31).

**Vireos**—All six species of **Vireos** on the West Virginia checklist were noted during the spring season in most areas of the state. The **Philadelphia Vireo** was spotted in Pocahontas (DB, 5/3), Wayne (JW, 4/25), and Wood (JB, 4/26) Counties.

**Crows, Jays, and Ravens**—**Blue Jays**, **American Crows**, and **Common Ravens** were abundant statewide. Matthew Orsie saw **Fish Crows** in Jefferson County by on April 18.

**Larks and Swallows**—Cynthia Ellis (Mason County, 3/22) and Gary Felton (Preston County, 5/29) had the only reports of **Horned Larks** during the spring season. All six species of **swallows** on the West Virginia checklist were seen during the spring. The most commonly reported was the **Northern Rough-winged Swallow**.

**Chickadees and Titmice**—**Carolina Chickadees** and **Tufted Titmice** were seen in many areas of the state. The **Black-capped Chickadees** were noted in Greenbrier County (BW, JBT, 5/2), Monongalia County (SO, 5/6), Pocahontas County (KK, 4/5), and Randolph County (BS, 3/8).

**Nuthatches, Creepers, and Wrens**—**Red-breasted Nuthatches** and **White-breasted Nuthatches** were noticed around many areas of the state. Nine counties listed sightings of **Brown Creepers**. **Carolina Wrens** and **House Wrens** were noted in most areas of the state. **Winter Wrens** were seen in eight counties. On May 25, Gary Felton saw a **Sedge Wren** in Preston County. **Marsh Wrens** were observed by Tom Igo in Cabell County on April 17 and by Sharon Kerns in Pocahontas County on May 3.

**Kinglets and Gnatcatchers**—Both **Ruby Crowned Kinglets** and **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were sighted in most areas of the state this season. **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** were noted in significant numbers over the entire state.

**Thrushes**—**Eastern Bluebirds**, **Veerys**, **Swainson's Thrushes**, **Hermit Thrushes**, **Wood Thrushes**, and **American Robins** appeared in good numbers in the appropriate habitats throughout the reporting areas. **Gray-cheeked Thrushes** were observed in Cabell County (DP, 5/17) and Wood County (JB, 5/2).

**Mockingbirds and Thrashers**—**Gray Catbirds**, **Northern Mockingbirds**, and **Brown Thrashers** were abundantly noted throughout the state in the spring season.

**European Starlings** were very abundant over the entire state.

**Pipits**—On March 22, Cynthia Ellis in Putnam County, and Gary Felton in Preston County, observed **American Pipits**.

**Cedar Waxwings** were common in the appropriate areas around the state.

**Warblers**—Thirty-seven warbler species were listed during the spring season. The following list notes the first reported date for each species and initials of observers: **Brewsters** (5/3, WJ), **Blue-winged** (4/20, CE), **Golden-winged** (4/

26, MAW), **Tennessee** (3/24 DB), **Nashville** (4/24, JT), **Northern Parula** (4/17, TI), **Yellow** (4/17, TI), **Chestnut-sided** (4/27, MO), **Magnolia** (4/25, JB, JN), **Cape May** (4/25, JB), **Black-throated Blue** (4/25, WJ), **Yellow-rumped** (3/1, JDe), **Black-throated Green** (4/11, DB,LM,JJP,JBT), **Blackburnian** (4/24, JT), **Yellow-throated** (3/23,JJP), **Pine** (3/4, JJP),

**Prairie** (4/11, CE), **Palm** (4/11, CE), **Bay-breasted** (4/29,MA), **Blackpoll** (5/4, JB), **Cerulean** (4/25, WJ,JN), **Black-and-white** (4/5, JN,MK,KK,JJP,DP), **American Redstart** (4/18, JBT), **Prothonotary** (4/22, MO), **Worm-eating** (4/20, CE), **Swainson's** (5/24, KC), **Ovenbird** (4/13, JJP), **Northern Waterthrush** (4/18, WT), **Louisiana Waterthrush** (3/20, JS), **Kentucky** (4/24, JN), **Mourning** (5/9, HBC), **Common Yellowthroat** (4/16, JNMK), **Hooded** (4/16, JNMK), **Wilson's** (5/4, JB), **Canada** (5/7, WJ), **Yellow-breasted Chat** (4/25, RJE). Gary Felton commented about the abundance of the **Golden-winged** and **Blue-winged Warblers**. According to Felton, "I'm still finding **Golden-winged Warblers**, but every year they are becoming less common due to changing habitat at historical nesting sites and displacement by **Blue-winged Warblers**." Felton also reported that **Nashville Warbler** numbers were higher than usual. Kevin Cade saw his first **Swainson's Warbler** at Panther Wildlife Management Area in McDowell County on May 24 in a Rhododendron. John Boback, Matthew Orsie, and Michael Deitrich found three **Swainson's Warblers** in a Rhododendron thicket on Lansing Road near the New River Gorge in Fayette County on May 25. J. Lawrence Smith remarked that his sighting of a **Louisiana Waterthrush** on March 20 in Cabell County was the earliest in his records for the area. Ann McRae noted that the **Mourning Warbler** seen in her lawn on May 18 was a new warbler for her state, county, and backyard lists.

**Tanagers**—**Summer Tanagers** were recorded in six counties while **Scarlet Tanagers** were noted in 21 counties during the spring.

**Towhees, Sparrows, and Juncos**—**Eastern Towhees** were widespread throughout the state for the spring period. **Sparrows** listed around the state included the following: **American Tree, Chipping, Field, Vesper, Savannah, Grasshopper, Fox, Song, Lincoln, Swamp, White-throated, and White-crowned**. Matthew Orsie noted one sighting of a **Clay-colored Sparrow** on May 25 in Tucker County. John Northeimer and Marjorie Keatley found a **Lark Sparrow** in Mason County on April 26. **Dark-eyed Juncos** were frequent visitors throughout the state.

**Cardinals and allies**—**Northern Cardinals, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, and Indigo Buntings** occurred quite often during the spring season. Jon Benedetti had two male **Blue Grosbeaks** at his feeder in Wood County on April 27. Benedetti noted that "I've seen these birds in Arizona and Costa Rica, but never in this area." James Triplett and J. Lawrence Smith saw **Blue Grosbeaks** in Mason

County on May 29, and James Taylor found the species in Mercer County on April 30.

**Bobolinks, Blackbirds, and allies**—During the spring season **Bobolinks, Red-winged Blackbirds, Eastern Meadowlarks, Rusty Blackbirds, Common Grackles Brown-headed Cowbirds, Orchard Orioles, and Baltimore Orioles** were spotted in most areas of the state. On April 9, LeJay Graffious of Bruceton Mills, Preston County, described a **Common Grackle** roost of over 300 birds, which was the first time for a roost this large at that time of the year.

**Siskins, Crossbills, and allies**—**Purple Finches, House Finches, and American Goldfinches** were prominently mentioned in reports for the period. The huge influx of **Pine Siskins** that were seen and recorded during this past winter continued for most of the spring. On May 9 in Pocahontas County, David Patick spotted **Red Crossbills. White-winged Crossbills** were observed significant numbers in seven counties from March through May. The last date recorded for **White-winged Crossbills** was on May 23 at Donnie Good's home in Kanawha County. On April 20, Hullet Good, Kanawha County, said that an aggressive **Pine Siskin** had eaten sunflower seeds from his hand two different times.

**House Sparrows** were common throughout the entire state.

**Contributors to the 2009 Spring Field Notes**—Susan Aaron (SA), Kyle Aldinger (KA), Marcia Anderson (MA), Wendell Argabrite (WA), Rodney Bartgis (RB), Jon Benedetti (JB), John Boback (JBo), Terry Bronson (TB), A. R. Buckelew Jr. (AB), Doren Burrell (DB), Kevin Cade (KC), David Carr and Judy Masi (DCJM), Patrick Collins (PC), Marquette Crocket (MC), Michael Deitrich (MD), Robert Dean (BD), Robin Dean (RD), Jefferey Del Col (JDe), Carol Del-Colle (CD), Cynthia Ellis (CE), Richard and Jeanette Esker (RJE), Gary Felton (GF), John Fichtner (JF), Steve Gillespie (SG), Donny Good (DG), Hullet Good (HG), Michael Griffith (MG), LeJay Graffious (LeJ), Handlan Bird Club (HBC), Roger Hardway and Sharon Cook (RHSC), Joey Herron (JOH), Joe Hildreth (JH), Rob Hilton (RH), Barbara Hohman (BH), Tom Igo (TI), Wilma Jarrell (WJ), William and Emily Johnson (WEJ), Kimberly Kazmierski (KK), Marjorie Keatley (MK), Sharon Kerns (SK), Beth Mankins (BM), Mountwood Bird Club (MBC), John Northeimer and Marjorie Keatley (JNMK), Susan Olcott (SO), Matt Orsie (MO), Nina Ott (NO), David Patick, M.D. (DP), Ron Perrone (RP), Wendy Perrone (WP), James and Judy Phillips (JJP), Gary Rankin (GR), Casey Rucker (CR), Route 2 Birders [David Patick, Wendell Argabrite, Michael Griffith, Gary Rankin] (R2B), Davette Saeler (DSa), Barbara Sargent (BS), J. Lawrence Smith (JS), James Taylor (JTa), Rob Tallman (RT), John Tharp II (JT), James and Beverly Triplett (JBT),

William Tolin (WT), Mindy and Allen Waldron (MAW), John Waugaman (JW),  
Scott Wilkinson (SW), Barry Williams (BW).

1198 Fledderjohn Rd.  
Charleston, WV 25314  
jtrippy@suddenlinkmail.com

## **New “Field Notes” Editor Announced**

Beginning with the 2009 winter season, *The Redstart* will have a new “Field Notes” Editor, Casey Rucker of Seneca Rocks, West Virginia. Casey is serving as a member of the West Virginia Bird Records Committee. He is an experienced observer of West Virginia birds. Casey’s address is P.O. Box 2, Seneca Rocks, WV 26884. His email address is autoblock@frontiernet.net. Please send your winter 2009–2010 notes to Casey.

We thank James Triplett and Beverly Triplett for their service as our “Field Notes” editors from the December 2007–January 2008 winter season through the fall of 2009. Their last “Field Notes” will be published in the spring of 2010. We are grateful for their hard work and well organized reports. Jim and Bev were successful in finding many interesting reports by scouring the Web and contacting many people for observations.

Albert R. Buckelew Jr.  
Editor, *The Redstart*